

serve on the commission after the expiration of his term. The legislation that established the commission permitted the chairman to serve until replaced, but when the law was amended this language was inadvertently omitted. The NCPD has scheduled yet another public hearing on the memorial for June 14, 2001. Meanwhile, court action on the lawsuit is on hold pending resolution of this issue, which may take several more months to conclude.

Mr. Speaker, more than 16 million Americans served in uniform during World War II. More than 400,000 gave their lives, over 670,000 were wounded, and millions more supported the war effort on the front here at home. Of the 16 million who served, only five million remain alive today. World War II veterans, who saved democracy and served heroically, today are battling the diseases and disabilities of older age. Today, our World War II veterans are dying at a rate of 1,100 per day. With more than 400,000 veterans dying each year, every delay in memorial construction ensures that hundreds of thousands of World War II veterans will never witness the completion of this memorial. H.R. 1696 will expedite construction of the memorial and make it possible for many of our World War II veterans to be able to see the memorial with their own eyes.

H.R. 1696 would declare that the National World War II Memorial complies with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, the Commemorative Works Act, and any other governing laws pertaining to the memorial's site and design. H.R. 1696 would direct expedited construction of the memorial, consistent with reasonable construction permit requirements of the Secretary of Interior and the National Park Service. In addition, H.R. 1696 would mandate that the decision to construct the memorial at the Rainbow Pool site and decisions regarding the design of the memorial are final and conclusive and shall not be subject to administrative or judicial review.

The Commemorative Works Act of 1986 governs the process of establishing memorials in Washington, DC. The Act gives the authority for final site and design approval to the Commission of Fine Arts, the NCPD, and the Secretary of the Interior. In total, eight sites were considered for the memorial. The final Rainbow Pool selection was the consensus choice as the only site commensurate with the significance of World War II in American and World history.

Since 1995, the memorial site and design have been the subject of 22 public meetings that resulted in the endorsement of hundreds of Members of Congress, an endorsement from the State Historic Preservation Officer of the District of Columbia, four endorsements from the District of Columbia's Historic Preservation Review Board, five approvals from the CFA, and five approvals from the NCPD.

In other words, the National World War II Memorial is the product of an open and democratic process, in full compliance with all applicable laws. The site and design were debated in the media and in 22 public meetings since 1995. No party has been denied the right to be heard, and critics have had full opportunity to state their positions.

On May 28th of this year, many of us will attend Memorial Day observances. We will with humility and thanks, pay sincere respect to those whose sacrifices and dedications have

protected the ideals on which America was founded. In this spirit, I strongly urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1696. The time is overdue to begin construction on this meaningful tribute and symbolic monument that will immortalize the defining moment of our history forever.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Utah (Mr. HANSEN), the chairman of our Committee on Resources.

(Mr. HANSEN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support this bill, which will expedite the construction of the national World War II memorial at the Rainbow Pool site on the Mall. I commend the gentleman from Arizona (Chairman STUMP) for the action he has taken on this.

It has been nearly 60 years since the people of our great Nation were called upon to defend democracy from the tyranny threatening to engulf the world. The best of America's sons and daughters heeded the call, and with the Nation united behind them, they changed the course of history. Now as America's greatest generation is in their twilight years, it is time to erect a fitting memorial to them on America's Mall as a testament to their sacrifices and their triumphant victory.

The American Battle Monuments Commission has met the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act, the Commemorative Works Acts, and all other laws dealing with the site and design of this memorial, yet the memorial remains mired in administrative procedure, which continues to delay the construction.

It is time to set aside the bureaucratic obstacles and do what is right. We owe nothing less to those who gave so much for their country and the world.

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON).

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, every Member of this body is anxious to see a memorial to the women and men who secured our freedom with their personal sacrifices and their lives. We can assure a memorial on the present timetable or sooner without passing this radically destructive bill that will do irrevocable harm to the World War II memorial itself by eliminating indispensable oversight for the largest and most significant memorial on the Mall since the Lincoln Memorial was constructed almost 80 years ago.

We can keep a memorial on schedule without destroying the Commemorative Works Act, signed by Ronald Reagan 16 years ago specifically to assure oversight of all construction on the Mall.

Those of us who wanted the extraordinary vista between the Washington

Monument and the Lincoln Memorial left unobstructed lost that battle several years ago. This bill responds to press reports that left the impression that the National Capital Planning Commission, the NCPD, would reconsider the entire World War II memorial project.

Both the NCPD and recent press reports have corrected this erroneous notion. The matter is before the NCPD again only because the Justice Department spotted a legal flaw that a hold-over member had called the vote into question. That would have imperiled the memorial.

This bill is not only unnecessary, it throws out the baby with the bath water that has already been eliminated. The only overreaching left now is in this bill. It would leave a huge memorial to rise on the Mall, without any Federal law or agency with the power or the expertise to assure that the memorial builders meet their commitments and that the many problems that have been identified are caught and avoided.

Here are some of them: Assuring that contaminated groundwater would be pumped out continually and treated before continuing into the Potomac River and Chesapeake Bay inasmuch as the memorial is to be built below the groundwater table;

Protecting the structural integrity of the Washington Monument's wooden foundations as groundwater in its subsoil is pumped out;

Replacing the groundwater upon which the old growth trees that beautify the Mall depend;

Assuring that helicopters have a place to land without putting helicopter pads on the memorial, a National Park Service proposal which was recently stopped by the NCPD;

Accommodating tour buses off the Mall area;

Assuring that the vital 17th Street artery of the District used by Virginia and Maryland commuters and tourists alike near the Tidal Basin is not closed to traffic;

Ensuring oversight of the nighttime lighting plan still to be developed;

Ensuring oversight of the sculptural elements of the memorial and any inscriptions on the walls;

Ensuring compliance with what has already been approved.

This bill, which had no hearing and is informed by no meetings with relevant agency personnel promises serious unintended and counterproductive consequences that could be both embarrassing and disastrous for the memorial.

In the past, the Congress has always avoided the precedent this bill would set; using our power to tamper with the detailed oversight necessary to assure the integrity of the Federal presence.

Vote no. The NCPD has already gotten the message.

□ 1430

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. HOUGHTON).